THE SUBSTANCE OF A SPEECH DELIVERED *By*

James Wilson, Esq.

Explanatory of the general Principles of the propoſed

Fœderal Conſtitution;

Upon a Motion made by the

Honorable *Thomas M'Kean,*

In the CONVENTION of the

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

On Saturday the 24th of November, 1787.

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Proceedings in Convention, &c.

SATURDAY, *November* 24, A. M. 1787.

The Convention met purſuant to Adjournment.

THE Minutes of yeſterday being read, the propoſed Conſtitution of Fœderal Government was taken up for a ſecond reading, after which the following proceedings took place.

Mr. M'KEAN. Mr. Preſident, there will perhaps be ſome difficulty in aſcertaining the proper mode of proceeding to obtain a deciſion upon the important and intereſting ſubject before us. We are certainly without precedent to guide us; but the utility of the forms obſerved by other public bodies, will be an inducement to adhere to them where a variation of circumſtance does not render a variation of the mode eſſentially neceſſary. As far, therefore, as the rules of the Legiſlature of Pennſylvania, will apply to the Conſtitution and buſineſs of this body, I ſhall recommend their adoption, but I perceive that in a very great degree we ſhall be obliged, for conveniency and propriety, to reſort to new regulations, ariſing from the ſingularity of the ſubject offered to our conſideration. For the preſent, however, I ſhall move you Sir, that we come to the following reſolution—"RESOLVED, that this Convention do adopt and ratify the Conſtitution of Fœderal Government as agreed upon by the Fœderal Convention at Philadelphia on the 17th day of September, 1787." This meaſure, Mr. Preſident, is not intended to introduce an inſtantaneous deciſion of ſo important a queſtion, but merely to bring the object of our meeting fully and fairly into diſcuſſion. It is not my wiſh that it ſhould be determined this day, nor do I apprehend it will be neceſſary that it ſhould be determined this day week; but it is merely preparatory to another motion with which I ſhall hereafter trouble you, and which, in my opinion, will bring on that regular and ſatisfactory inveſtigation of the ſeparate parts of the propoſed Conſtitution, which will finally enable us to determine upon the whole.

Mr. WILSON. As the only member of this reſpectable body, who had the honor of a ſeat in the late Fœderal Convention, it is peculiarly my duty Mr. Preſident, to ſubmit to your conſideration, the general principles that have produced the national Conſtitution, which has been framed and propoſed by the aſſembled delegates of the United States, and which muſt finally ſtand or fall by the concurrent deciſion of this Convention, and of others acting upon the ſame ſubject, under ſimilar powers and authority. To frame a govern-

a Government for a ſingle city or State, is a buſineſs both in its importance and facility, widely different from the taſk entruſted to the Fœderal Convention, whoſe proſpects were extended not only to thirteen Independent and Sovereign States, ſome of which in territorial juriſdiction, population, and reſource, equal the moſt reſpectable nations of Europe, but likewiſe to innumerable States yet unformed, and to myriads of citizens who in future ages ſhall inhabit the vaſt uncultivated regions of the continent. The duties of that body therefore, were not limitted to local or partial conſiderations, but to the formation of a plan commenſurate with a great and valuable portion of the globe.

I confeſs, Sir, that the magnitude of the object before us, filled our minds with awe and apprehenſion. In Europe the opening and extending the navigation of a ſingle river, has been deemed an act of imperial merit and importance; but how inſignificant does it ſeem when we contemplate the ſcene that nature here exhibits, pouring forth the Potowmack, the Rapahannock, the Suſquehanna, and other innumerable rivers, to dignify, adorn, and enrich our ſoil. But the magnitude of the object was equalled by the difficulty of accompliſhing it, when we conſidered the uncommon dexterity and addreſs that were neceſſary to combat and reconcile the jarring intereſts that ſeemed naturally to prevail, in a country, which preſenting a coaſt of 1500 miles to the Atlantic, is compoſed of 13 diſtinct and Independant States, varying eſſentially in their ſituation and dimenſions, and in the number and habits of their citizens. Their intereſts too, in ſome reſpects really different, and in many apparently ſo; but whether really or apparently, ſuch is the conſtitution of the human mind, they make the ſame impreſſion, and are proſecuted with equal vigour and perſeverance. Can it then be a ſubject for ſurprize that with the ſenſations indiſpenſably excited by ſo comprehenſive and ſo arduous an undertaking, we ſhould for a moment yield to deſpondency, and at length, influenced by the ſpirit of conciliation, reſort to mutual conceſſion, as the only means to obtain the great end for which we were convened? Is it a matter of ſurprize that where the ſprings of diſſenſion were ſo numerous, and ſo powerful, ſome force was requiſite to impel them to take, in a collected ſtate, a direction different from that which ſeparately they would have purſued?

There was another reaſon, that in this reſpect, encreaſed the difficulties of the Fœderal Convention—the different tempers and diſpoſitions of the people for whom they acted. But, however widely they may differ upon other topics, they cordially agree in that keen and elevated ſenſe of freedom and Independence, which has been manifeſted in their united and ſucceſsful oppoſition to one of the moſt powerful kingdoms of the world. Still it was apprehended by ſome, that their abhorrence of conſtraint, would be the ſource of objection and oppoſition; but, I confeſs, that my opinion, formed upon a knowledge of the good ſenſe, as well as the high ſpirit of my Conſtituents, made me confident that they would eſteem that government to be the beſt, which was beſt calculated eventually to eſtabliſh and ſecure the dignity and happineſs of their country. Upon this ground, I have occaſionally ſuppoſed that my conſtituents have aſked the reaſon of my aſſent to the ſeveral propoſitions contained in the plan before us. My anſwer, tho' conciſe, is a candid, and, I think a ſatisfactory one—becauſe I thought them right; and thinking them right, it would be a poor compliment indeed to preſume they could be diſagreeable to my Conſtituents—a preſumption that might occaſion a retort to which I wiſh not to expoſe myſelf, as it would again be aſked, "is this the opinion you entertain of thoſe who have confided in your judgment? Fromwhat ground do you infer that a vote right in itſelf would be diſagreeable to us?" and it might with juſtice be added, "this ſentiment evinces that you deſerved not the truſt which we repoſed in you." No Sir!—I have no right to imagine that the reflected rays of delegated power can diſpleaſe by a bright-

a brightneſs that proves the ſuperior ſplendor of the luminary from which they proceed.

The extent of country for which the New Conſtitution was required, produced another difficulty in the buſineſs of the Fœderal Convention. It is the opinion of ſome celebrated writers, that to a ſmall territory, the democratical, to a midling territory, (as Monteſquieu has termed it) the monarchical, and, to an extenſive territory, the deſpotic form of government, is beſt adapted. Regarding then, the wide and almoſt unbounded juriſdiction of the United States, at firſt view, the hand of deſpotiſm ſeemed neceſſary to controul, connect, and protect it; and hence the chief embarraſment aroſe. For, we knew that, although our Conſtituents would chearfully ſubmit to the legiſlative reſtraints of a free government, they would ſpurn at every attempt to ſhackle them with deſpotic power.

In this dilemma, a Fœderal Republic naturally preſented itſelf to our obſervation, as a ſpecies of government which ſecured all the internal advantages of a republic, at the ſame time that it maintained the external dignity and force of a monarchy. The definition of this form of government may be found in Monteſquieu, who ſays, I believe, that it conſiſts in aſſembling diſtinct ſocieties, which are conſolidated into a new body, capable of being encreaſed by the addition of other members;—an expanding quality peculiarly fitted to the circumſtances of America.

But, while a Fœderal Republic, removed one difficulty, it introduced another, ſince there exiſted not any precedent to aſſiſt our deliberations; for, though there are many ſingle governments, both ancient and modern, the hiſtory and principles of which are faithfully preſerved, and well underſtood, a perfect confederation of independent ſtates is a ſyſtem hitherto unknown. The Swiſs Cantons, which have often been mentioned in that light, cannot properly be deemed a Fœderal Republic, but merely a ſyſtem of United States. The United Netherlands are alſo an aſſemblage of ſtates; yet, as their proceedings are not the reſult of their combined deciſions, but of the deciſions of each ſtate individually, their aſſociation is evidently wanting in that quality which is eſſential to conſtitute a Fœderal Republic. With reſpect to the Germanic Body, its members are of ſo diſproportionate a ſize, their ſeparate governments and juriſdictions ſo different in nature and extent, the general purpoſe and operation of their union ſo indefinite and uncertain, and the exterior power of the Houſe of Auſtria ſo prevalent, that little information could be obtained or expected from that quarter. Turning then to ancient hiſtory, we find the Achœan and Lycian leagues, and the Amphyctionic council bearing a ſuperficial reſemblance to a Fœderal Republic; but of all theſe, the accounts which have been tranſmitted to us, are too vague and imperfect to ſupply a tolerable theory, and they are ſo deſtitute of that minute detail from which practical knowledge may be derived, that they muſt now be conſidered rather as ſubjects of curioſity, than of uſe or information.

Government, indeed, taken as a ſcience, may yet be conſidered in its infancy; and with all its various modifications, it has hitherto been the reſult of force, fraud, or accident. For, after the lapſe of ſix thouſand years ſince the creation of the world, America now preſents the firſt inſtance of a people aſſembled to weigh deliberately and calmly, and to decide leiſurely and peacably, upon the form of government by which they will bind themſelves and their poſterity. Among the ancients, three forms of government ſeem to have been correctly known, the Monarchical, Ariſtocratical, and Democratical; but their knowledge did not extend beyond thoſe ſimple kinds, though much pleaſing ingenuity has occaſionally been exerciſed, in tracing a reſemblance of mixed government in ſome ancient inſtitutions, particularly between them and the Britiſh Conſtitution. But, in my opinion, the reſult of theſe ingenious refinements does more honor to the moderns in diſcovering, than to the ancients in forming the ſimilitude. In the work of Homer, it

is ſuppoſed by his enthuſiaſtic commentators, the ſeeds of every ſcience are to be found; but, in truth, they are firſt obſerved in ſubſequent diſcoveries, and then the fond imagination tranſplants them to the book. Tacitus, who lived towards the cloſe of that period, which is called ancient, who had read the hiſtory of all antecedent and cotemporary governments, who was perfectly competent to judge of their nature, tendency, and quality, Tacitus conſiders a mixed government as a thing rather to be wiſhed than expected; and, if ever it did occur, it was his opinion, that it could not laſt long. One fact, however, is certain, that the ancients had no idea of repreſentation, that eſſential to every ſyſtem of wiſe, good, and efficient government. It is ſurpriſing, indeed, how very imperfectly, at this day, the doctrine of repreſentation is underſtood in Europe. Even Great-Britain, which boaſts a ſuperior knowledge of the ſubject, and is generally ſuppoſed to have carried it into practice, falls far ſhort of its true and genuine principles. For, let us enquire, does repreſentation pervade the conſtitution of that country? No. Is it either immediately or remotely the ſource of the executive power? No. For it is not any part of the Britiſh conſtitution, as practiſed at this time, that the king derives his authority from the people. Formerly that authority was claimed by hereditary or divine right; and even at the revolution, when the government was eſſentially improved, no other principle was recognized, but that of an original contract between the ſovereign and the people—a contract which rather excludes than implies the doctrine of repreſentation. Again; Is the judicial ſyſtem of England grounded on repreſentation? No. For the judges are appointed by the king, and he, as we have already obſerved, derives not his majeſty or power from the people. Laſtly, then, let us review the legiſlative body of that nation, and even there, though we find repreſentation operating as a check, it cannot be conſidered as a pervading principle. The lords, acting with hereditary right, or under an authority immediately communicated by regal prerogative, are not the repreſentatives of the people, and yet they, as well as the ſovereign, poſſeſs a negative power in the paramount buſineſs of legiſlation. Thus the vital principle of the Britiſh conſtitution is confined to a narrow corner, and the world has left to America the glory and happineſs of forming a government, where repreſentation ſhall at once ſupply the baſis and the cement of the ſuperſtructure. For, repreſentation, Sir, is the true chain between the people, and thoſe to whom they entruſt the adminiſtration of the government; and, though it may conſiſt of many links, its ſtrength and brightneſs, never ſhould be impaired. Another, and perhaps the moſt important obſtacle to the proceedings of the Fœderal Convention, aroſe in drawing the line between the national and the individual governments of the ſtates.

On this point a general principle readily occurred, that whatever object was confined in its nature and operation to a particular State, ought to be ſubject to the ſeparate government of the States, but whatever in its nature and operation extended beyond a particular State, ought to be comprehended within the Fœderal juriſdiction. The great difficulty, therefore, was the application of this general principle, for it was found impracticable to enumerate and diſtinguiſh the various objects to which it extended, and as the mathematics, only, are capable of demonſtration, it ought not to be thought extraordinary that the Convention could not develope a ſubject, involved in ſuch endleſs perplexity. If however, the propoſed conſtitution ſhould be adopted, I truſt that in the theory there will be found ſuch harmony, and in the practice ſuch mutual confidence between the national and individual governments, that every ſentiment of jealouſy and apprehenſion will be effectually deſtroyed. But Sir, permit me to aſk, whether on the ground of a union, the individual or the national government ought moſt to be truſted? For my part, I think it more natural to preſume that the intereſt of each would be purſued by the whole, than the reverſe of the propoſition,

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that the ſeveral States would prefer the intereſt of the confederated body; for in the general government each is repreſented, but in the ſeparate governments, only the ſeparate States.

Theſe difficulties, Mr. Preſident, which embarraſſed the Fœderal Convention, are not repreſented to enhance the merit of ſurmounting them, but with a more important view, to ſhew how unreaſonable it is to expect that the plan of government, ſhould correſpond with the wiſhes of all the States, of all the citizens of any one ſtate, or of all the citizens of the United continent. I remember well, Sir, the effect of thoſe ſurrounding difficulties in the late Convention. At one time the great and intereſting work ſeemed to be at a ſtand, at another it proceeded with energy and rapidity, and when at laſt, it was accompliſhed, many reſpectable members beheld it with wonder and admiration. But having pointed out the obſtacles which they had to encounter, I ſhall now beg leave to direct your attenion, to the end which the Convention propoſed.

Our wants, imperfections, and weakneſs, Mr. Preſident, naturally incline us to ſociety; but it is certain, ſociety cannot exiſt without ſome reſtraints. In a ſtate of nature each individual has a right, uncontrouled, to act as his pleaſure or his intereſt may prevail, but it muſt be obſerved that this licence extends to every individual, and hence the ſtate of nature is rendered inſupportable, by the interfering claims, and the conſequent animoſities of men, who are independant of every power and influence, but their paſſions and their will. On the other hand, in entering into the ſocial compact, though the individual parts with a portion of his natural rights, yet, it is evident that he gains more by the limitation of the liberty of others, than he loſes by the limitation of his own,—ſo that in truth, the aggregate of liberty is more in ſociety, than it is in a ſtate of nature.

It is then, Sir, a fundamental principle of ſociety, that the welfare of the whole ſhall be purſued and not of a part, and the meaſures neceſſary to the good of the community, muſt conſequently be binding upon the individuals that compoſe it. This principle is univerſally allowed to be juſt with reſpect to ſingle governments, and there are inſtances in which it applies with equal force to independent Communities; for the ſituation and circumſtances of ſtates may make it as neceſſary for them, as for individuals, to aſſociate. Hence, Mr. Prefident, the important queſtion ariſes——are ſuch the ſituation and circumſtances of the American States?

At this period, America has it in her power to adopt either of the following modes of Government: She may diſſolve the individual ſovereignty of the States, and become one conſolidated empire; She may be divided into thirteen ſeparate, independant, and unconnected Commonwealths; ſhe may be erected into two or more confederacies; or, laſtly, ſhe may become one comprehenſive Fœderal Republic.

Allow me, Sir, to take a ſhort view of each of theſe ſuppoſitions. Is it probable that the diſſolution of the State governments, and the eſtabliſhment of one conſolidated empire, would be eligible in its nature, and ſatisfactory to the people in its adminiſtration? I think not, as I have given reaſons to ſhew that ſo extenſive a territory could not be governed, connected, and preſerved, but by the Supremacy of deſpotic power. All the exertions of the moſt potent Emperors of Rome were not capable of keeping that Empire together, which in extent was far inferior to the dominion of America. Would an Independent, an unconnected ſituation, without any aſſociating head, be advantageous or ſatisfactory? The conſequences of this ſyſtem would at one time expoſe the States to foreign inſult and depredations, and, at another, to internal jealouſy, contention, and war. Then let us conſider the plan of two or more confederacies which has often been ſuggeſted, and which certainly preſents ſome aſpects more inviting than either of the preceeding modes, ſince the ſubjects of ſtrife would not be ſo numerous, the ſtrength of the confederates would be greater, and their intereſts more united. But even here

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when we fairly weigh the advantages and the diſadvantages, we ſhall find the laſt greatly preponderating; the expences of government would be conſiderably multiplied, the ſeeds of rivalſhip and animoſity would ſpring up, and ſpread the calamities of war and tumult through the country; for tho' the ſources of rancour might be diminiſhed, their ſtrength, and virulence would probably be increaſed.

Of theſe three ſpecies of government, however, I muſt obſerve, that they obtained no advocates in the Fœderal Convention, nor can I preſume that they will find advocates here, or in any of our ſiſter ſtates. The general ſentiment in that body, and, I believe, the general ſentiment of the citizens of America, is expreſſed in the motto which ſome of them have choſen, UNITE OR DIE; and while we conſider the extent of the country, ſo interſected and almoſt ſurrounded with navigable rivers, ſo ſeparated and detached from the reſt of the world, it is natural to preſume that Providence has deſigned us for an united people, under one great political compact. If this is a juſt and reaſonable concluſion, ſupported by the wiſhes of the people, the Convention did right in propoſing a ſingle confederated Republic. But in propoſing it, they were neceſſarily lead, not only to conſider the ſituation, circumſtances, and intereſts of one, two, or three ſtates, but of the collective body; and as it is eſſential to ſociety, that the welfare of the whole ſhould be preferred to the accommodation of a part, they followed the ſame rule in promoting the national advantages of the Union, in preference to the ſeparate advantages of the States. A principle of candor, as well as duty, lead to this conduct; for, as I have ſaid before, no government, either ſingle or confederated can exiſt, unleſs private and individual rights are ſubſervient to the public and general happineſs of the nation. It was not alone the ſtate of Pennſylvania, however important ſhe may be as a conſtituent part of the union, that could influence the deliberations of a Convention, formed by a delegation from all the United States, to deviſe a government adequate to their common exigencies, and impartial in its influence and operation. In the ſpirit of union, inculcated by the nature of their commiſſion, they framed the conſtitution before us, and in the ſame ſpirit, they ſubmit it to the candid conſideration of their conſtituents.

Having made ſome remarks upon the nature and principles of civil ſociety, I ſhall now take a curſory notice of civil liberty, which is eſſential to the well-being of civil government. The definition of civil liberty is, briefly, that portion of natural liberty which men reſign to the government, and which then produces more happineſs, than it would have produced if retained by the individuals who reſign it;—ſtill however leaving to the human mind, the full enjoyment of every privilege that is not incompatible with the peace and order of ſociety. Here I am eaſily lead to the conſideration of another ſpecies of liberty, which has not yet received a diſcriminating name, but which I will venture to term Fœderal liberty. This, Sir, conſiſts in the agregate of the civil liberty which is ſurrendered by each ſtate to the national government; and the ſame principles that operate in the eſtabliſhment of a ſingle ſociety, with reſpect to the rights reſerved or reſigned by the individuals that compoſe it, will juſtly apply in the caſe of a confederation of diſtinct and Independent States.

Theſe obſervations have been made, Mr. Preſident, in order to preface a repreſentation of the ſtate of the union, as it appeared to the late Convention. We all know, and we have all felt, that the preſent ſyſtem of confederation is inadequate to the government and the exigencies of the United States. Need I deſcribe the contraſted ſcene which the revolution has preſented to our view? On the one hand, the arduous ſtruggle in the cauſe of liberty terminated by a glorious and triumphant peace; on the other, contention and poverty at home, diſcredit and diſgrace abroad. Do we not remember what high expectations were formed by others and by ourſelves

ourſelves, on the return of peace? And have thoſe honorable expectations from our national character, been realized? No!—What then has been the cauſe of diſappointment? Has America loſt her magnanimity or perſeverance? no. Has ſhe been ſubdued by any high handed invaſion of her liberties? ſtill I anſwer no; for, dangers of that kind were no ſooner ſeen, than they were repelled. But the evil has ſtolen in from a quarter little ſuſpected, and the rock of Freedom, which ſtood firm againſt the attacks of a foreign foe, has been ſapped and undermined by the licentiouſneſs of our own citizens. Private calamity, and public anarchy have prevailed; and even the bleſſing of Independency has been ſcarcely felt or underſtood by a people who have dearly atchieved it.

Shall I, Sir, be more particular in this lamentable hiſtory? The commencement of peace, was likewiſe the commencement of our diſtreſſes and diſgrace. Devoid of power, we could neither prevent the exceſſive importations which lately deluged the country, nor even raiſe from that exceſs a contribution to the public revenue; devoid of importance, we were unable to command a ſale for our commodities in a foreign market; devoid of credit, our public ſecurities were melting in the hands of their deluded owners, like ſnow before the Sun; devoid of dignity, we were inadequate to perform treaties on our own part, or to compel a performance on the part of a contracting nation. In ſhort, Sir, the tedious tale diſguſts me, and I fondly hope, it is unneceſſary to proceed. The years of languor are over. We have ſeen diſhonor and deſtruction, it is true, but we have at length penetrated the cauſe, and are now anxious to obtain the cure. The cauſe need not be ſpecified by a recapitulation of facts; every act of Congreſs, and the proceedings of every State are replete with proofs in that reſpect, and all point to the weakneſs and imbecility of the exiſting Confederation; while the loud and concurrent voice of the people proclaims an efficient national government to be the only cure. Under theſe impreſſions, and with theſe views, the late Convention were appointed and met; the end which they propoſed to accompliſh, being to frame one national and efficient government, in which the exerciſe of beneficence, correcting the jarring intereſts of every part, ſhould pervade the whole, and by which the peace, freedom, and happineſs of the United States ſhould be permanently enſured. The principles and means that were adopted by the Convention to obtain that end, are now before us, and will become the great object of our diſcuſſion. But on this point, as upon others, permit me to make a few general obſervations.

In all governments, whatever is their form, however they may be conſtituted, there muſt be a power eſtabliſhed, from which there is no appeal; and which is therefore called abſolute, ſupreme, and uncontroulable. The only queſtion is, where that power is lodged?—a queſtion that will receive different anſwers from the different writers on the ſubject. Sir William Blackſtone ſays, it reſides in the omnipotence of the Britiſh Parliament, or in other words, correſponding with the practice of that country, it is whatever the Britiſh Parliament pleaſes to do: So that when that body was ſo baſe and treacherous to the rights of the people as to tranſfer the legiſlative authority to Henry the eighth, his exerciſing that authority by proclamations and edicts, could not ſtrictly ſpeaking be termed unconſtitutional, for under the act of Parliament his will was made the law, and therefore, his will became in that reſpect the conſtitution itſelf. But were we to aſk ſome politicians who have taken a faint and inaccurate view of our eſtabliſhments, where does this ſupreme power reſide in the United States? They would probably anſwer, in their Conſtitutions. This however, tho' a ſtep nearer to the fact, is not a juſt opinion; for, in truth, it remains and flouriſhes with the people; and under the influence of that truth we, at this moment, ſit, deliberate and ſpeak. In other countries, indeed

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the revolutions of government are connected with war, and all its concomitant calamities. But with us, they are conſidered as the means of obtaining a ſuperior knowledge of the nature of government, and of accompliſhing its end. That the ſupreme power therefore, ſhould be veſted in the people, is, in my judgment, the great panacea of human politics. It is a power paramount to every conſtitution, inalienable in its nature, and indefinite in its extent. For, I inſiſt, if there are errors in government the people have the right not only to correct and amend them, but likewiſe totally to change and reject its form; and under the operation of that right, the citizens of the United States can never be wretched beyond retrieve, unleſs they are wanting to themſelves.

Then let us examine, Mr. Preſident, the three ſpecies of ſimple governments, which, as I have already mentioned, are the monarchical, ariſtocratical and democratical. In a monarchy, the ſupreme power is veſted in a ſingle perſon: in an ariſtocracy, it is poſſeſſed by a body, not formed upon the principle of repreſentation, but enjoying their ſtation by deſcent, by election among themſelves, or in right of ſome perſonal or territorial qualification; and, laſtly, in a democracy, it is inherent in the people, and is either exerciſed by themſelves or by their repreſentatives. Each of theſe ſyſtems has its advantages, and its diſadvantages. The advantages of a monarchy are ſtrength, diſpatch, and unity: its diſadvantages are expence, tyranny, and war. The advantages of an ariſtocracy are experience, and the wiſdom reſulting from education: its diſadvantages are the diſention of the governors, and the oppreſſion of the people. The advantages of a democracy are liberty, caution, induſtry, fidelity, and an opportunity of bringing forward the talents and abilities of the citizens, without regard to birth or fortune: its diſadvantages are diſention and imbecility, for the aſſent of many being required, their exertions will be feeble, and their councils too ſoon diſcovered.

To obtain all the advantages, and to avoid all the inconveniences of theſe governments, was the leading object of the late Convention. Having therefore conſidered the formation and principles of other ſyſtems, it is natural to enquire, of what deſcription is the Conſtitution before us? In its principles, Sir, it is purely democratical; varying indeed, in its form, in order to admit all the advantages, and to exclude all the diſadvantages which are incidental to the known and eſtabliſhed conſtitutions of government. But when we take an extenſive and accurate view of the ſtreams of power that appear through this great and comprehenſive plan, when we contemplate the variety of their directions, the force and dignity of their currents, when we behold them interſecting, embracing, and ſurrounding the vaſt poſſeſſions and intereſts of the Continent, and when we ſee them diſtributing on all hands, beauty, energy and riches, ſtill, however numerous and wide their courſes, however diverſified and remote the bleſſings they diffuſe, we ſhall be able to trace them all to one great and noble ſource, THE PEOPLE.

Such, Mr. Preſident, are the general obſervations with which I have thought it neceſſary to trouble you. In diſcuſſing the diſtinct propoſitions of the Fœderal Plan, I ſhall have occaſion to apply them more particularly to that ſubject, but at preſent, I ſhall conclude with requeſting the pardon of the Convention for having ſo long intruded upon their patience.

I *do Certify that Mr.* Thomas Bradford *has this* 26*th day of November*, 1787, *entered a Pamphlet, entitled,* " *The ſubſtance of a Speech delivered by* James Wilſon, *Eſq. Explanatory of the general principles of the propoſed Fœderal Conſtitution; upon a Motion made by the Honorable* Thomas M'Kean, *in the Convention of the State of* Pennſylvania," *agreeable to an Act of Aſſembly.*

J. B. SMITH,
Prothonatary of Philadelphia County.